

## **BOSTON: NOW**

**Part I: May 10- June 5, 1983**

**Part II: June 14- August 14, 1983**

### **Institute of Contemporary Art: Boston**

**Aldo Tambellini**

#### **How did your work in the 60's lead you into video?**

I came to New York at the end of 1959 and worked very intensely in sculpture and painting. The paintings were series of black enamels on paper or on very large canvas. The sculpture: cement, metal, hydrocal, industrial found objects, pipe, nails, -within a concave round form- were sometimes painted with tar. They became very large. The development into media happened very quickly and simultaneously. I painted some imagery on glass slides and extended the dimension into actual space, projecting from rooftops on the lower east side, working with black poets, Ishmael Reed, Norman Pritchard, and dancers in what I called *Electromedia*; then to 16 mm hand printed film and then on to video.

I came to media as a social reaction against what kept the art media under control -for media was outside of art. No gallery or museum in 1967 in New York City would give a serious thought to a CV tape. For months I was obsessed by media- looking at it in bars and other public places - analyzing it.

*Electromedia* was the fusion of the various arts and media; it broke media away from its traditional role and brought it into the area of modern art by bringing the other arts, poetry, sound, painting and kinetic sculpture, into a time/space re-orientation toward media, transforming both the arts and the media.

The attitude of what was called Underground in New York in the early 1960's was to break the rules and definitions of what the arts were about and create new artistic forms. What we were doing was not what the Establishment was doing, in the art context.

We opened the Gate Theatre on Second Avenue and 10th Avenue in 1965 running with underground experimental film twelve hours each day, seven days a week. On another floor I opened the Black Gate Theatre for live environmental multi-media performances and experimentations. Many new forms came from that era. Many of these ideas became academic in the 70's. The term "installation" did not exist then either. We were groping in the dark towards new kinds of concepts.

I opened the Black Gate Theatre with Otto Piene. By then I was working in video as a natural outgrowth and obsession; it was 1967. In '68 I was called by Otto to go to Germany and there we did Black Gate Cologne at WDR-TV, the first broadcast by artists. I did the "Medium is the Medium" for WGBH in Boston in 1969 and was in Boston again at the Rose Art Museum in "Vision as Television". In 1977 I came to Boston again as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T.

Currently, my work is concerned with developing the concept of *Communicationsphere*, working with interactive telecommunications systems, primarily slow scan television and two-way cable TV. *Communicationsphere* is coordinated with Sarah Dickinson.

#### **Have you always aligned yourself with a group?**

As an artist one is always interacting and exchanging while generating ideas and involved in participation. If one thinks of art as a social activity, then you can find a connection to others likewise engaged in society. The definition of a group can vary; so can the interaction and exchange within it.

Today the question becomes more complex as the artist is confronted with a role in mass media/mass consciousness society in the 1960's, in New York City, I related, in various ways, to groups such as the underground filmmakers. I formed Group Center in 1960, which connected painters, sculptors, poets, photographers, musicians and dancers active outside the Establishment. All were finding what were then new ways of bringing the work directly to the public. The time was tough and raw; we made things happen then independently, things which later ironically became highly organized by the Establishment.

### **What is *Communicationsphere*?**

*Communicationsphere* connects artists, engineers, technicians and interested people around collaborative projects on a variety of concepts on and about media and low-cost interactive television systems. *Communicationsphere* is concerned with the re-definition and transformation of our environment by the continuously changing communications technologies, dissolving the boundaries between media, the arts and life.

### **Does *Inauguration '81* relate to your earlier work?**

There is an America invented by the media. It has roots in Hollywood and other mythologies, which were transposed by the Europeans and began to have their own characteristics in the new land. Media connects us and creates the reality, which is more than reality; it is "an image of an image" in multi-channels.

In *Inauguration '81* each channel is happening "live" - each network has its own camera crew with access to satellite and switching systems - one station is broadcasting the old movie "There's No Business Like Show Business." The TV sets project big brass and stars and Reagan is one of them becoming President. The compression of time in television blows up the essence.

The structure of broadcast television is the mythology of our government and land. TV is the museum of the masses; it is the environment inhabiting our minds, made possible by the ever developing technological means in the complex systems of communication networks. There are moments in television of epic significance. *Inauguration '81* is one of those moments.

Will the hostages be released? A victorious Carter, who lost the election, is triumphant. It is the glory of the Inauguration and the iconic image of Marilyn Monroe with Ethel Merman simultaneous channels.

The tape was shot in a video store in a small town outside Boston. I called ahead and asked to have all available channels switched on. During the taping one salesman, oblivious to it all, came in front of a TV set, trying to sell it to a customer. He is in the tape.

*Inauguration '81* is a part of an ongoing series on and about television, which began in New York with *Black TV* in 1968, followed by *The Day Before the Moon Landing* in 1969 on old CV tape and followed by others, among them *The Royal Wedding* shot with a portable mixer in a small diner in Central Square, Cambridge. The event was being broadcast live in the early hours of the morning and people went on making their coffee and omelets, often pausing to watch the monitor.

Life and media became one at a rally in Columbus Circle, New York. I was there with a video camera just moments after an attempted assassination and another man was gunned down before the rally ended, stacks of the Daily News, just published, had the photos on the front page.

### **Aldo Tambellini**

Born 1930, Syracuse, New York

1959 Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana, M.F.A.

1956 University of Oregon, Graduate School of Architecture and Allied Arts, Eugene

1954 Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, B.F.A.,

1946 Art Institute, Lucca, Italy

### **Awards:**

1981 M.I.T Council for the Arts, Cambridge, Project Grant

1979 M.I.T Council for the Arts, Cambridge, Project Grant

1973 New York State Council on the Arts, Experimental TV Lab, WNET Project Grant

1969 Oberhausen Film Festival, International Grand Prix

### **Selected Individual Exhibitions:**

1977 "Photography and Video Work," The Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York  
Centerscreen Visiting Artist Series, Harvard University Cambridge

1971 "Cineprobe," Museum of Modern Art, New York

1968 Museum Wallraf-Richartz, Cologne, Germany

### **Selected Group Exhibitions:**

1982 "Festival of the Future," DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts

1981 "Tele-Sky," Sky Art Conference, Cambridge

"TV to TV" Broadcast in "Fast Forward," TV Ontario, Canada

"Centervideo," Paris and Bordeaux, France; Cologne, Germany; Zurich, Switzerland

### **Affiliation:**

Center for Advanced Visual Studies, M.I.T., Cambridge